

# Open Forum 3

## Web Site Transcript

### Chapter 9

**A = News Anchor**

**B = Dr. Sachs**

A: Good morning. If you've just joined us on *The Morning Beat*—it's 7:20.

If you're like many of our viewers, you're probably getting ready for the day, the kids need to get off to school, and you're looking at another long commute to work. Maybe you're thinking about the bills that you need to pay, or the mortgage, or next month's paycheck. So, is the answer moving to another country where life is less stressful? Canada, perhaps, or France, Germany, or Italy?

The bad news is that people in those countries are almost as stressed as we are in the United States. A recent poll in 10 countries around the world found some surprising results. Our neighbors to the north often tell us that they lead a more relaxed lifestyle in Canada. But according to this survey, the same number of Canadians and Americans reported that they sometimes or frequently experienced stress. That number? Over 75%.

That's right! Three-quarters of the North American population is stressed out. To find out why, we're joined by our chief medical correspondent, Dr. Tim Sachs. Dr. Tim, what's going on? Why all the stress?

B: Sue, blame it on the modern world. In almost every country surveyed, the number one source of stress was either money or jobs, which amounts to the same thing. Financial stress either means you don't have enough money or you want more. Wealth has become so important in our society that we are literally making ourselves ill because of it. More and more people are working two or more jobs, or working crazy hours every week just to make a living.

A: It's interesting to me how similar the results of the poll are in so many countries. The same levels of stress, the same causes of stress. Why is that?

B: I think we're exporting our stress. It's a common misconception that technology makes our life easier. But technology means fewer manual jobs because factories use robots not people. Email, cell phones, and the Internet mean that some businesses are switched on for 24 hours a day. And with more people owning bigger cars and living further out of the cities, commutes are getting longer. In fact,

you see more stress at every level of society. People without much money find that it's harder and harder to survive. The middle classes need to make more money in order to maintain their standard of living. Meanwhile, the wealthiest members of society are often those with the most stressful jobs.

A: Okay, so where should we go to escape? I understand Mexico is a good choice.

B: Mexico is a great country—I was there on vacation last year. And it's true that Mexicans reported the least stress of all the countries in the survey—fewer than half the people questioned there experienced frequent stress. That's not to say life is perfect there. Far from it. There is widespread poverty and very high crime rates in parts of Mexico.

A: But at least they're cool about it! What about Europe?

B: The results from Europe were very interesting. The stereotype is that the French don't care about the modern world, and that they spend their days calmly sipping coffee and discussing philosophy. But they are as stressed as any nation. The survey asked this question: "Do you ever feel that you have lost control over your life?" and nearly half of the French respondents replied yes. That's close to the highest result on that question, which by the way was found in Britain. Our transatlantic cousins in the U.K. feel like they're losing control.

A: What's the story in Germany? I read that the Germans don't have that feeling of life being beyond control, but they do have a high level of stress. What does that mean?

B: I think it means that the Germans are really good at handling their stress. They live stressful lives, but they keep their stress under control. We could learn a lesson or two from them.

A: Dr. Tim, aside from money and jobs, what other factors could be responsible for our stress?

B: Some experts on this side of the Atlantic blame increased fears over terrorism and security since the attacks of 2001. I think there's some truth in that because the threat of terrorism challenged many people's sense of security, both in the U.S. and Canada.

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A: Canada?

B: Yes, there are some psychiatrists saying that the terrorist attacks made many Canadians realize that they are also vulnerable—we share the same continent, after all. And don't forget that Canada was also hit by the SARS epidemic—that was the mysterious respiratory disease which killed 44 people in Toronto in 2003. Tourism to Canada decreased; as a result, jobs were lost, and that means more stress.

A: So, what can our viewers do to reduce their stress?

B: Here are some tips: Make sure you get enough sleep. Take time out to do something fun. Make quality time for your family. Exercise is a great stress-reducer. You could even get a pet. Animals have been shown to lower their owners' stress!

A: Thanks for the advice. How's your stress, Doc?

B: I feel just great thanks, Sue! I have the best job in the world!